

VA**U.S. Department
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News Release

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Washington, D.C. - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it will tackle what many consider to be the bane of the health-care industry -- waiting times and delays. VA has contracted with the Boston-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to guide the effort.

"Reducing delays is critical. It can improve medical outcomes and positively affect patient satisfaction, costs and quality of life," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West Jr. "Our goal is to reduce overall delays and waits systemwide by 50 percent or more within the next six to eight months."

Teams from approximately 130 VA medical centers and outpatient clinics will work together from July 1999 until March 2000 to learn and implement proven techniques. The teams will focus on patient flow, access and efficiency at outpatient clinics.

"More timely service and less complex systems can be achieved by redesigning our systems of care," said Acting Under Secretary for Health Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite. "Our ultimate goal in this initiative is to enhance quality of care and improve patient satisfaction."